

102770 6



George Mollyn (left) and Roger Shura check the radiation level of a granite tomb in Fern-

wood Cemetery with a gamma-ray scanner. The level was normal.

Special to The Inquirer / JONATHAN WILSON

EPA detects tainting

Radiation near Lansdowne site

By Cynthia J. McGroarty
Special to The Inquirer

An Environmental Protection Agency gamma-ray scanner detected high levels of radioactivity in three areas within a mile radius of a radiation-contaminated warehouse in Lansdowne.

At a news conference Tuesday, EPA officials would not say where the levels were found, but they said they would investigate the areas. The high readings, detected by a cargo van equipped with a \$12,000 gamma-ray scanner, could be originating from building or fill material contaminated by the warehouse, at Union and Austin Avenues, or from materials discarded by a University of Pennsylvania professor who worked with radium at his home on East Stratford Avenue, according to EPA engineering technologist Roger Shura.

Twenty elevated levels have been detected, radiation consultant George Mollyn said. Most of those levels are only slightly above normal, he said, adding that prolonged exposure to those levels was comparable to sitting too long in the sun.

"A modest amount [of exposure] won't increase your cancer risk significantly," Mollyn said.

Shura and Mollyn, who works for the Virginia contracting firm Sandy Cohen & Associates, are in the second and final week of a search through Lansdowne and parts of East Lansdowne, Upper Darby and Yeadon for the sandy, brown waste ore that may have been discarded from the warehouse. Officials have said they are concerned that the ore, called pitchblende, may have been dumped somewhere in or around the borough. They have said they have no records of where the ore was taken after processing.

Leanne Nurse of the EPA said Tuesday that it could have been buried under the warehouse, where high levels of radiation have been detected.

"That's one reason why we need to take the warehouse down," Nurse said.

The warehouse, used for radium processing from 1915 to 1925, is scheduled to be dismantled by the end of the year. A house next to the warehouse, at 133 Austin Ave., also may have to be dismantled. The house was found to be highly contaminated with radium and radon in tests conducted last summer by the EPA.

Both the warehouse and the house have been listed under the federal Superfund cleanup program.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Thursday, November 14, 1991

ENVIRONMENT / Page 3

Radiation scan finds high levels near Lansdowne

AR500030